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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted within the Dade County (Florida) Public Schools to determine why large numbers of Black students were using the racial majority to minority transfer option, and, in particular, transferring from Van E. Blanton Elementary And Horace Mann Junior to Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior schools. From a list of 471 transferees, 33 were randomly selected and interviewed. A majority indicated that they transferred because the new schools were "better," i.e., they had less fighting, fewer problems, greater concern by school administration and teachers for student well-being, books to take home, better facilities, better discipline, a majority White student body, and a better overall program. A review of achievement results indicated that median percentile scores (reading and mathematics) were higher in Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior than in the other two schools. Interviews with students currently enrolled at Horace Mann also pointed to many of the problems perceived by the transferring students, but their overall perception was not as negative. In the future, the School Board might: (1) conduct an in-depth review of educational program offerings and discipline at schools losing large numbers of students through transfers; (2) conduct a public relations campaign to accentuate the positive features of Van E. Blanton Elementary and Horace Mann Junior; and (3) consider amending current transfer procedures with a view toward ending transfers to schools that are utilized beyond their capacity. (KH)

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DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A STUDY OF UTILIZATION OF THE RACIAL MAJORITY TO MINORITY STUDENT TRANSFER OPTION WITHIN SELECTED SCHOOLS

MAY 6 1985

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JUNE 1984

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A Study of Utilization of The Racial Majority to Minority Student Transfer Option Within Selected Schools

Office of Educational Accountability
June 1984

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted at the request of the Office of School Operations in order to determine why a large number of students were transferring out of certain schools in the North Central area using the racial majority to minority transfer option. Of specific concern was the large number of transfers from Horace Mann Junior and Van E. Blanton Elementary schools.

The major thrust of the study was to determine why a large number of Black students and their parents are exercising the majority/minority transfer to leave Van E. Blanton Elementary and Horace Mann Junior to enter Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior. From a list of 471 students (provided by the area office) who transferred through majority/minority option to Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior, 33 were randomly selected and interviewed. A majority of these students indicated that they transferred because the new schools were "better." When asked what they meant by better, most responded by listing such items as, less fighting, fewer problems, greater concern by school administration and teachers for the well-being of students, books to take home, better facilities, better discipline, a majority white student body, and a better overall program. A review of the achievement results indicated that the median percentile scores (Reading and Mathematics) were higher in Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior than in those schools from which the students had reportedly transferred. Interviews were also conducted with students currently enrolled at Horace Mann Junior. While results of those interviews also pointed to many of the problems perceived by the transferring students, their overall perception was not as negative.

Secondary findings that emerged from the study include:

1. The majority of the majority/minority transfers to Miami Shores and North Miami Junior came from schools other than Van E. Blanton and Horace Mann. During the 1983-84 school year, a total of 43 students transferred from Van E. Blanton to various schools, but only one of these went to Miami Shores. Similarly, of the 97 transferring from Horace Mann, only 13 went to North Miami Junior. The current majority/minority transfers to Miami Shores and North Miami Junior come from 42 different schools.

2. An examination of area and school records indicates that 86 percent of students shown on the computer files as having transferred using the majority/minority option from Blanton and 43 percent from Horace Mann never attended those schools. This and other evidence indicates that many students are bypassing their attendance areas and going directly to the transfer school.

3. Records on school utilization were examined for Miami Shores and North Miami Junior. These records indicate that Miami Shores is currently at 133 percent of capacity while North Miami is at 101 percent of capacity. Majority/minority

transfers make up 20 percent of that 133 percent at Miami Shores and 18 percent of the 101 percent at North Miami Junior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations generated from the findings are listed below.

1. Conduct an in-depth program review of educational program offerings and discipline at Van E. Blanton Elementary and Horace Mann Junior (and possibly other schools losing large numbers of students through majority/minority transfers) to determine if, in fact, there is a need for improvement at these schools.

2. Conduct a public relations campaign within the communities encompassing Van E. Blanton Elementary and Horace Mann Junior in order to accentuate the positive features of these schools and correct any existing misconceptions.

3. Consider amending current transfer procedures with a view toward placing a cap on all types of transfers (excluding those associated with change of residence) to schools that are utilized beyond their capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Students in the regular school program (K-12) are assigned to attend school on the basis of the residence of their parent or legal guardian and the attendance area of the school as approved by the Board.

A student wishing to transfer from one school to another within the county must secure the transfer from the sending school before being admitted to the new school. The parent or legal guardian must apply for the transfer in person and must provide the necessary information needed in granting the transfer.

There are three bases upon which a transfer may be granted; these are:

A. The student resides with the parent or legal guardian and a change of residence occurs.

B. The area superintendent (or designated line director) may administratively assign or approve the reassignment or transfer of a student to another school. Examples:

   a) A student is unable to secure a vocational program offering or a subject essential for post-secondary educational training,
   b) A before or after-school supervision hardship would exist if an elementary school student remained in the school to which originally assigned.

C. The student desires to transfer on the basis of racial majority/minority in the school. This type of transfer is applicable on a Black, non-Black basis and can occur only when the "racial" group to which the student belongs, is not the predominant "racial" group in the school to which the transfer is sought. The net effect of the transfer must be that the receiving school's Black-non-Black membership is more balanced as a result of that transfer. This type of transfer must originate through the Area Office serving the parents' residence address. Notably, current policy does not take into consideration the effect of the transfer on the overcrowding of the receiving school.

Due to the number of Black students electing to use the majority/minority transfers, the Office of School Operations requested that the Office of Educational Accountability conduct a majority/minority transfer study. The study was designed to determine the reasons Black students and their parents are exercising the majority/minority transfer option. Of specific interest were the large number of majority/minority transfers leaving Horace Mann Junior High and Van E. Blanton Elementary and the large number entering Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior High Schools.

The two major questions examined during this study were:

1. Why are large numbers of Black students exercising the majority/minority transfer option?

2. Are the students leaving Van E. Blanton and Horace Mann the same students that are entering Miami Shores and North Miami Junior?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In conducting the study, a variety of activities were undertaken. These included:

1. Examining several key school files for the purpose of:
   a. determining the number of students leaving a particular school by way of a majority/minority transfer.
   b. determining the number of students entering a particular school by way of a majority/minority transfer.
   c. determining if the school's majority/minority file and the area file were congruent.

2. Conducting interviews and analyzing the results for the purpose of comparing the results to objective data.

3. Examining the ISIS (Integrated Student Information System) file for the purpose of:
   a. determining what schools the majority/minority transferees attended the past two years.
   b. determining the students' 1983 Stanford Achievement Test scores.

Document Review

Documents and other sources of data selected for review included:

1. District and School Profiles (1982-83 and 1983-84).
2. Student Transfer forms.
3. Student Referral forms.
4. Student cumulative records
5. Computer attendance/enrollment files.

Interviews

Between May 18 and 25, 1984, interviews were conducted to identify the reasons large numbers of Black students and their parents were exercising the majority/minority option.

Through the use of a computer program, a random sample of 95 students and their parents was selected for participation in this

study. Due to the unavailability of some of the selected students on the day of the evaluators' visit to the school and the time limitation to complete the study, thirty-three students were actually interviewed. In addition, principals, registrars, attendance clerks, counselors and selected parents were also interviewed.

Analysis of Data

To obtain the reasons why large number of Black students are exercising the majority/minority transfer option, files and interview responses were analyzed in the following manner:

1. The response to each question was tabulated for all participants.
2. The responses to relevant questions were compared to the appropriate information in the ISIS and/or school file.

FINDINGS

The findings have been organized in terms of the two major questions studied.

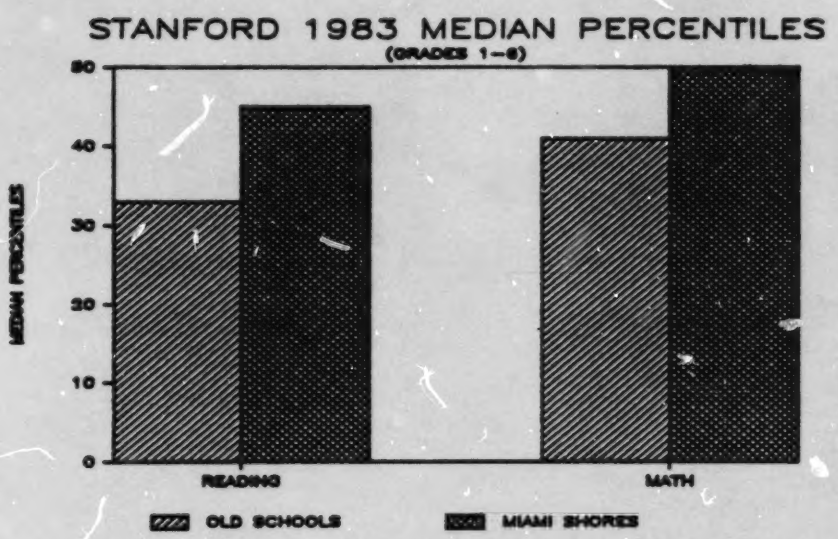
I. Why are large numbers of Black students exercising the majority/minority transfer option?

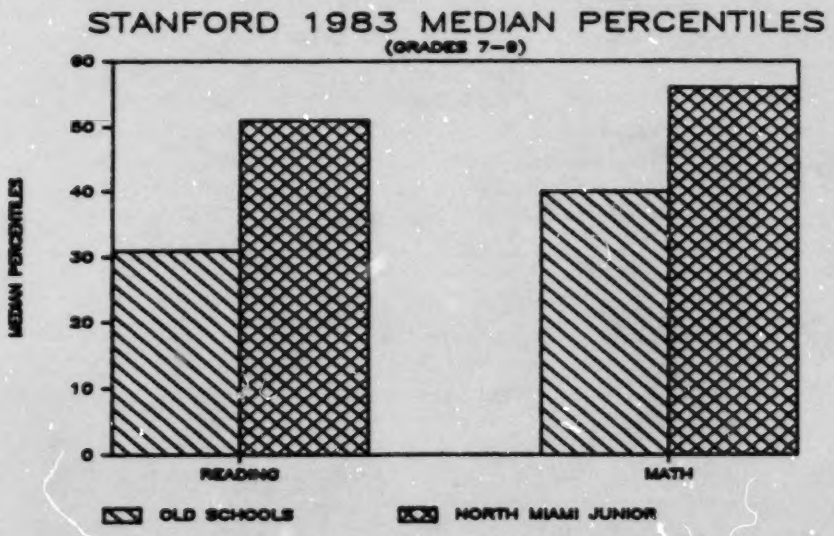
A random sample of 33 majority/minority transfer students who had transferred into Miami Shores and North Miami were interviewed. These majority/minority transfer students were selected from a list provided by the area offices and included transferees from Van E. Blanton, Horace Mann, and 40 other schools.

Each student participating in the study was asked why he/she left the old school and transferred into Miami Shores/North Miami Jr. The majority indicated that they transferred because the new schools were "better". When asked what they meant by better, most of them responded by saying better meant such things as less fighting, fewer problems, greater concern by school administration and teachers for the well-being of students, books to take home, better facilities, better discipline, majority white student body, and a better overall program.

A sample of students currently at Van E. Blanton and Horace Mann were also interviewed to determine their perception of these schools. Their responses indicated a high incidence of fighting, problems with other students, and poor facilities; however, their perception of the overall program was not as negative as of those students who had transferred from or bypassed those schools.

Comparisons were made to see if Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior High had higher levels of student achievement as measured by the districtwide testing program. The median percentile scores (Reading and Mathematics) of students in the old schools (schools from which students had transferred) were compared to the median percentile scores of students in the new schools (Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Jr.). Results indicated that the median percentiles of students' scores in the old schools were lower than the median percentiles of students in the new schools.





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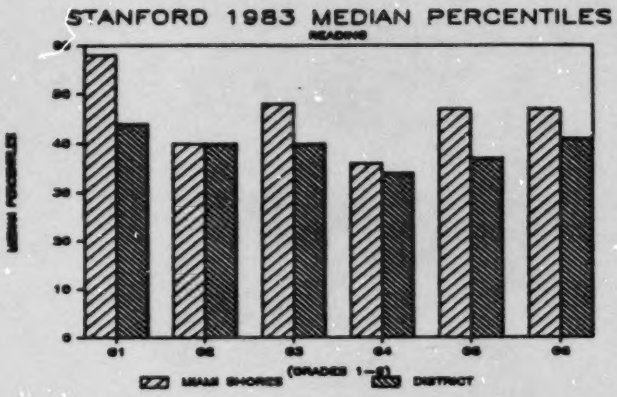
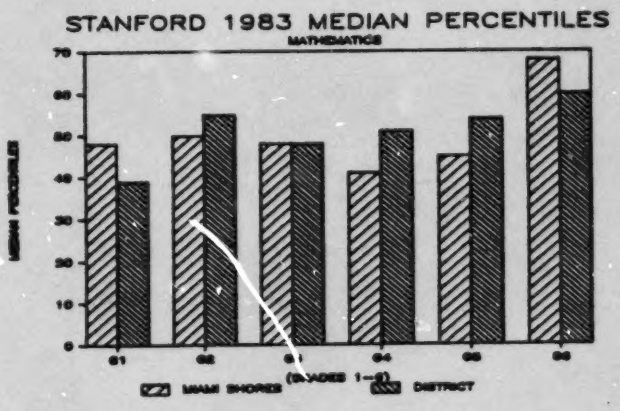
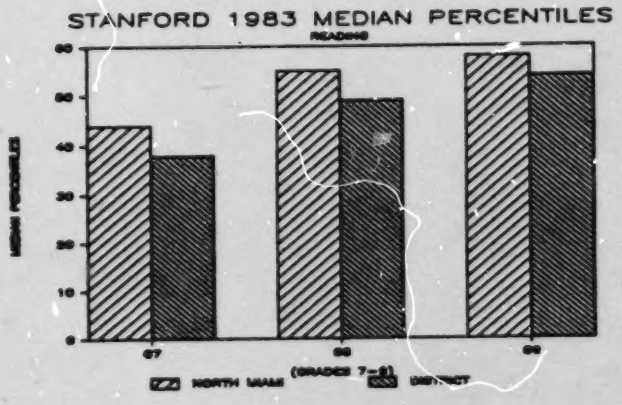
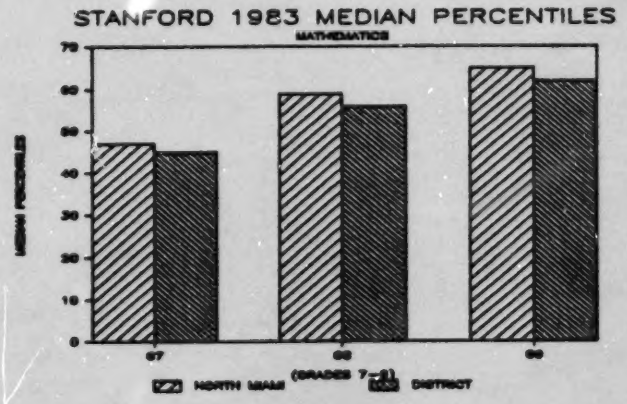
The median percentile scores (Reading and Mathematics) of students at Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior High were compared to the districtwide scores by grade. In most cases the median percentile scores (Reading and Mathematics) at Miami Shores and North Miami were higher than the districtwide median percentile scores. See the Tables below.









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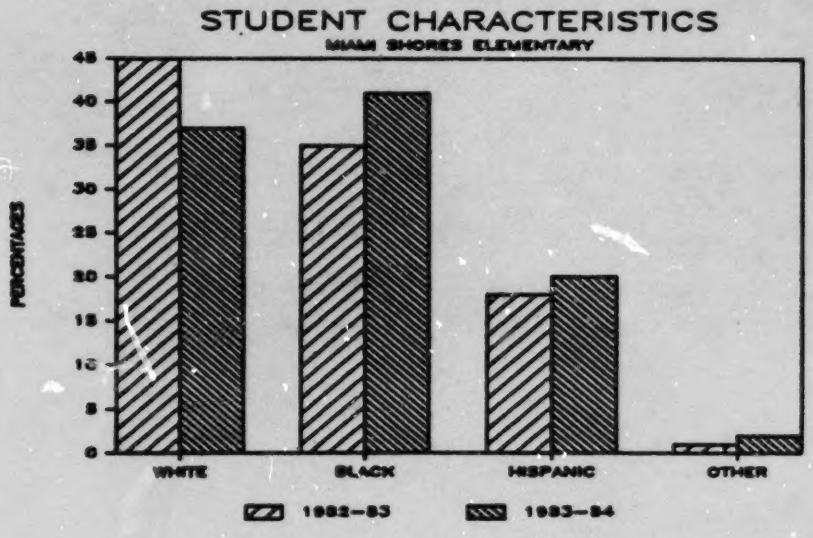
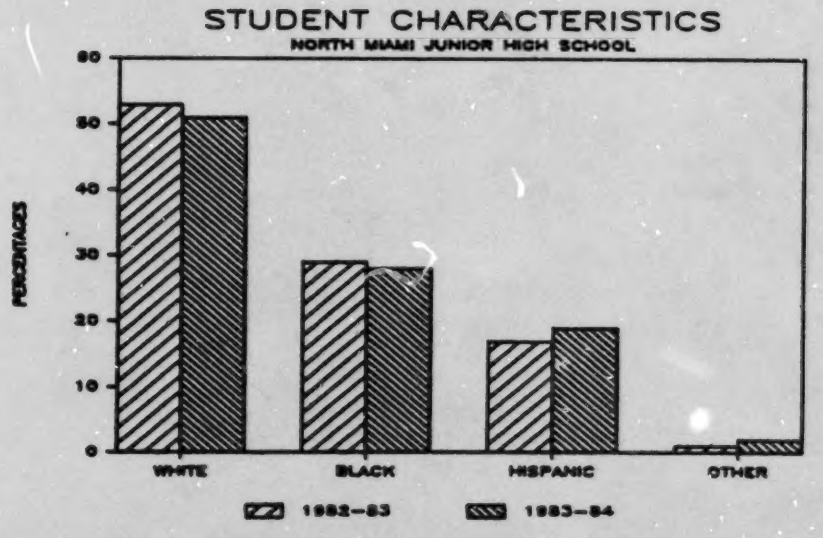
In addition to test scores and other criteria mentioned previously, one other factor considered by parents and students in their decision to transfer to another school is the racial makeup of the student body, where reported perceptions indicated a belief that schools with majority white student populations were better.

The tables below show the racial makeup of Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior High for the past two years. Note the changing trend at Miami Shores Elementary where the percentage of Black students is now greater than that of the White Non-Hispanic students.





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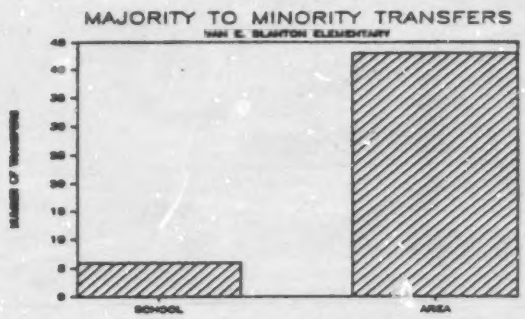
II. Are the students leaving Van E. Blanton and Horace Mann the same students that are entering Miami Shores and North Miami Junior?

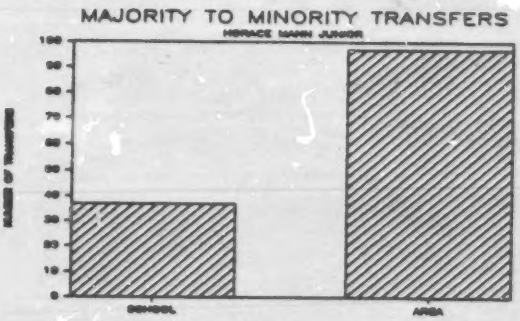
An overwhelming majority of majority/minority transfers from Van E. Blanton Elementary and Horace Mann Jr. entered schools other than Miami Shores and North Miami Jr.

During 1983-84 a total of 43 students transferred from Van E. Blanton to various schools; only one of these went to Miami Shores. Similarly, of the 97 transferring from Horace Mann, only 13 went to North Miami Junior. From a review of the central computerized student files (ISIS), it was determined that the 471 students who had transferred to Miami Shores Elementary and North Miami Junior had come from 42 different schools.

In addition, an examination of area and school records indicated that 86 percent of students shown on the computer files as having transferred using the majority/minority option from Blanton and 43 percent from Horace Mann, had never attended those schools. This and other evidence indicates that many students are bypassing their attendance areas and going directly to the transfer school.

In the charts below, the first column shows the number of majority/minority transfers as recorded by the school and the second column the number of transfers recorded by the area office.





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Records on school utilization were also examined for Miami Shores and North Miami Junior. These records indicate that Miami Shores is currently at 133 percent capacity while North Miami is at 101 percent capacity. Of the 1088 students attending Miami Shores (October 1983), 213 were majority/minority transfers. During the 1983-84 school year, 20 percent of the total enrollment at Miami Shores and 18 percent of the total enrollment at North Miami were majority/minority transfers.

The School Board of Dade County, Florida, adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination in educational programs/activities and employment and strives affirmatively to provide equal opportunity for all as required by:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended - prohibits discrimination on the basis of age between 40 and 70.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - prohibits discrimination against the handicapped.

Veterans are provided re-employment rights in accordance with P. L. 93-508 (Federal) and Florida State Law, Chapter 77-422, which also stipulates categorical preferences for employment.